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SUBJECT: DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER PROPOSES ISSUING JOINT
COMMUNIQUE ON AZERBAIJAN PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO WASHINGTON

Classified By: DCM Jason Hyland, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. During discussions over President Aliyev's upcoming visit to Washington, Deputy Foreign Minister Khalafov presented a three-page draft joint statement to DCM for possible signing during the trip. DCM said the Embassy would pass the draft to Washington, but that it was a matter for the White House to decide. Khalafov and DCM agreed on the importance of the trip in the context of the developing U.S.-Azerbaijan relationship, and DCM noted that the visit is also an opportunity for the GOAJ to demonstrate its openness to democratization. DCM and Khalafov discussed the importance of movement on land acquisition for the new embassy compound and Azerbaijan's interest in a seat on the new UN Human Rights Council (septel). DCM again reiterated Washington's hopes that Azerbaijan will back Guatemala's UN Security Council bid over Venezuela's. We faxed the draft joint statement to EUR/CARC April 13. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) DCM met with Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov at the latter's request on April 13 to discuss Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's April 25-28 trip to Washington. Khalafov said that Azerbaijan considers the trip very important and that the U.S.-Azerbaijan relationship has developed significantly since 1997, the last time an Azerbaijani President visited Washington. Khalafov said that the GOAJ would like to see a joint statement by the two presidents, and handed DCM copies of a three-page draft in English and Azerbaijani (a copy was faxed to EUR/CARC on April 13).

¶3. (C) The DCM agreed that the visit is very important and an opportunity to put out a positive message about the close cooperation that Azerbaijan and the United States enjoy in many areas. The DCM said that the centerpiece of the visit will be the meeting between the two presidents, but that there will also be other meetings, and the trip is an excellent opportunity for the GOAJ to demonstrate its openness to concerns in these areas, especially on human rights and democracy. The DCM added that the issue of a joint statement is a decision for the White House. He said he would immediately pass the GOAJ draft to Washington.

¶4. (C) Deputy Foreign Minister Khalafov thanked the DCM and said he believes the visit will launch a new phase in the U.S.-Azerbaijan relationship. Khalafov also thanked the DCM for the Embassy's support in arranging the meeting between Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister and the Secretary some weeks ago, which played an important part in getting the Presidential visit scheduled. Azerbaijan has been a reliable partner for the United States in the region, said Khalafov, and the GOAJ wants to see those relations grow.

¶5. (C) DCM responded that the Embassy would do everything possible to ensure a successful visit. DCM noted that the

media aspect of the trip will be important as well, and that the trip is an opportunity for Azerbaijan to present its message to the American public. DCM encouraged Khalafov to read the April 10 White House statement announcing the visit, which expresses clearly and succinctly the importance and multifaceted nature of the U.S.-Azerbaijan relationship. The USG recognizes both the value of the relationship and areas where it can be made to work better. Given that we live in an era of democratic change, noted DCM, it is certain that the question will be asked as to what Azerbaijan will do to advance democracy.

16. (C) DCM also stressed that the Embassy needs to make a final decision quickly on purchasing land for the New Embassy Compound (NEC) and hopes a breakthrough will come soon. Khalafov and DCM both agreed that there could be no better symbol of the enduring U.S.-Azerbaijan relationship than an NEC that will endure for decades. DCM also reiterated Washington's desire for Azerbaijan to back Guatemala's bid for a UN Security Council seat over Venezuela's, and Khalafov said he would convey that information once again. Khalafov and DCM also discussed Azerbaijan's bid for a seat on the new UN Human Rights Council (reported septel).
HARNISH